

## **Local Community Network Meeting Notes**

Meeting Title: Local Community Network - Hestercombe

Date: Wednesday, 17 April 2024

Time: 7.00 pm - 8.46 pm

Location: North Newton Village Hall

Chaired by: Stuart Haskins (West Monkton Parish Council) (Chair)

### **LCN core membership attendance:**

| <b>Name:</b>               | <b>Representing</b>                     |
|----------------------------|---|
| Norman Cavill (Vice-Chair) | Somerset Council                        |
| Helen Barrington           | Thurloxtton Parish Council (clerk)      |
| Hendrick Coombs            | Thurloxtton Parish Council              |
| Charlie Cudlip             | Creesh St Michael Parish Council        |
| Kate Gibbins               | Kingston St Mary Parish Council (Clerk) |
| Kieran Roe                 | Creech St Michael Parish Council        |
| Phil Spencer               | North Petherton Town Council            |
| Paul Townsend              | Kingston St Mary Parish Council         |
| Andrew Williams            | Creech St Michael Parish Council        |
| Doug Wilson                | Broomfield Parish Council               |
| Sue Habberfield            | North Petherton Town Council            |
| Joy Norris                 | North Petherton Town Council            |

## **Officer attendance:**

| <b>Name:</b>   | <b>Representing</b> |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Ollie Lindsell | Somerset Council    |
| Sunita Mills   | Somerset Council    |
| Stephen Dury   | Somerset Council    |
| Emily Window   | Somerset Council    |
| Julie Cooper   | Somerset Council    |

## **Other attendees:**

| <b>Name:</b> | <b>Representing</b>            |
|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Tina Talbot  | Community Council for Somerset |
| Helen Barham | Little Steps Pre-School        |

## **Apologies:**

| <b>Name:</b> | <b>Representing</b> |
|--------------|---------------------|
| Lee Baker    | Somerset Council    |
| Tom Deakin   | Somerset Council    |

## **Summary of discussion:**

### **Agenda Summary of key points of discussion and outcome: Action by: item:**

#### **Item 34: Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Tom Deakin and Cllr Lee Baker.

Item 35: **Declarations of Interest**

There were no new declarations of interest.

Item 36: **Notes from the Previous Meeting**

The notes of the previous meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024 were approved as the correct record.

Item 37: **A Report on the recent LCN Chairs and Vice Chairs meeting at Somerton**

An update was provided on the recent work on LCNs, including issues like affordable housing, transport and road maintenance. There were updates on LCN working groups, such as youth and anti-social behaviour and the active travel group in Bridgwater, and the links with Spark Somerset.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- What does the loss of Democratic Services Support mean? *Currently Democratic Services produce the minutes, so the LCN team will need to produce their own minutes. The Terms of Reference are currently set up similar to council meetings. The hope is to make these less in depth.*
- On 25<sup>th</sup> April there is a Corporate and Resources Scrutiny, the 5<sup>th</sup> item on the agenda is LCNs and their terms of reference. You can attend via teams.
- Can information about these meetings be shared? *Yes, will consider how it can be circulated.*
- LCN team will also be writing reports on their activities. It is important to remain flexible, and be responsive to feedback.
- Are LCNs secure going forward? *At the moment, the council is committed to LCNs. Obviously can't predict the future.*
- On devolution, a lot of the changes parishes are concerned about won't happen until 2025, to give parish councils time to prepare.
- There have been opportunities for chairs of LCNs to put forward their views.
- Where does the resource for the 9 officers who support the 18 LCNs come from? Who are they accountable to? *Funding for LCN Officers is from existing revenue money.*

*We are accountable to the councillors, and link officers are an efficient use of resources for the LCNs. We also support working groups, and bring issues from LCNs to both councillors and officers. There is commitment in areas such as highways working groups, climate change, flooding, etc.*

- *Is one LCN half of a full-time job? There is a lot more than just the LCN meetings that goes into the LCNs, especially as more priorities come forward.*
- *Has the proposal for the £50,000 pothole filler been put back? There has been a delay in the Highway Steward programme to give parishes time to make that decision as a result of feedback from parishes. Budget decisions change after consultation.*

There was an update on the Highways Working Group for Hestercombe LCN, who met for the first time the week previous. Three parishes attended and it was a very positive meeting. It is possible for an LCN to commission a steward, who would only be responsible for potholes that are not a safety issue. Somerset Council uses their own resources for potholes that are safety issues, based on depth.

Following this, further points were raised:

- In Thurloxtton, the issues are potholes, planning, and keeping the place tidy and drain covers are clear. Elsewhere in the LCN, parking is an issue. These are the ones brought to the Council's attention.
- One parish spends much of its budget on clearing drain covers and verges and gets a lot of positive feedback on this work.

**Item 38: Active Travel Presentation**

A presentation was given on Active Travel, which includes walking, wheelchair users, bikes, and scooters. It detailed the situation around the current Local Transport Plan, which is out of date, and they are currently writing a new plan incorporating an Active Travel Strategy which will be involved in allocating funding. This will be brought back to the LCN for consultation. A lot of the national guidance is based on towns, so Somerset needs to write its own guidance focused on rural communities. Examples of community led active travel such as the Strawberry

Line Society were given, and the team wants to look at how they can facilitate that, through building a step-by-step guide for communities, including information on how to bid for funding.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Can looking at ways to get from villages to towns be part of the plan?
- Buses are not reliable. They are expensive, but if they are not reliable, people won't use them. Some figures of bus usage are not accurate due to non-paying passengers like pensioners.
- In new developments we want to get people involved in Active Travel.
- There are services you can book such as responsive transport that people are not aware of. There needs to be better communication about services available.
- Would people use a bus service that operated one day per week in villages?
- Bus journeys take longer than they used to.
- The LCN could be involved in better communication, find out how their community gets their information about transport.
- People can be signposted to village agents to find out if they meet criteria to register for some transport services.
- Where there is interest we can add areas to the list but with the financial situation there are no guarantees. A wishlist can be put together.

It was agreed that parishes would go back to their communities and find out what communication would be helpful and signpost people to village agents.

Item 39: **Summary Report on Public Engagement over Peat Trials (Moors and Level report) including details of Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Information was shared regarding the re-wetting of peat and the consultation Natural England are carrying out. There was also information provided about the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), the objects and the overall benefits.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- How many parishes have heard about this previously?

*None of the parishes in attendance had heard about it. A letter had been sent to every Parish and Town Council.*

- The importance of food security, as UK is the fourth most populous country in Europe. *Food security and nature recovery don't have to be in opposition, they can work together.*
- Linked with local planning, but they keep building new developments.
- The local plan is being developed and will have equal weight with the LNRS.
- Funding is being sought to increase biodiversity.
- What can parishes do to help? *Parishes can promote the poster and the survey, which closes soon. Survey found at <https://someset.gov.uk/lnrs>*
- For new developments, there is the biodiversity net gain process.
- Smaller areas can have a bigger impact on nature recovery, particularly where they do not have other uses. It can open up opportunities for funding.
- The Council can work together with communities to find a solution that suits all parties.

Item 40: **Report on Young People Working Group**

An update was provided on the recent first meeting of the LCN's Young People Working Group. The meeting had low attendance, and the LCN team would like to encourage parish councils to sign up. At the meeting, they discussed vandalism and how that links with provision for young people, and they have been working in West Monkton to survey young people and with the Youth Alliance to identify needs of young people across the LCN.

The next meeting is 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2pm.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- What was attendance at the meeting? *3 parishes attended.*
- Kingston St Mary were not sent information about this and would like to be involved. How is the information sent out? *Through the LCN team. If you contact the LCN inbox, they will add you to the list. Information is sent out to all parish clerks and everyone who is signed up. Communication issues will be fed back to the LCN officer.*

- Village agents – can we have a summary of what their function is? *Village agents can help people with lots of different problems, helping find care, blue badges, help with transport, benefits, etc.*
- Can information on village agents be sent to parish councils? Yes.

Item 41: **Public Question Time**

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Poor communication with parishes. There needs to be a point of contact and a distribution network. *This is the first time we are aware of communication issues. Information should be sent to parish clerks.*
- There is a large amount of information coming from the Council so we don't want people to be inundated. It's really key that clerks circulate the information. We will look at how we can improve that.
- Would like more updates on the highways working group meetings. Who do we contact around highways? *A list of names and contact details will be put together and circulated to parish clerks.*
- There are differences in communication between former district areas, so these need to be standardised.
- Please email the LCN inbox and the feedback can be circulated across the team.
- Contact lists for highways were promised a year ago for parish clerks, and we are still waiting for this. *The most effective communication with highways at the moment is through the working group.*
- The best way to resolve a pothole is to submit a request through the council website, which gets it added to a worklist. There should be a response from this.
- Some attendees reported there was no response about progress of complaints.
- There are also issues with reporting problems with rubbish collection. One area had six weeks with no collection, and no response to reports. Eventually took it to their local councillor. *Waste is a different system to highways, so can't speak to that.*

Item 42: **Update on Actions from the Previous Meeting**

The next meeting is on the 19<sup>th</sup> June, at Broomfield Village Hall.

This will be the LCN's Annual General Meeting.

Contact officer for meeting: [hestercombelcn@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:hestercombelcn@somerset.gov.uk)